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Narrator**

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Interviewers**

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This is an interview at the New York State Military museum in Saratoga Springs New York. The 25th of November 2003. 9:00am. Interviewers are Mike Russet and Wayne Clark.

MRWC: Could you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth please?

SJ: Steve T. Jordan. I was born in Schenectady, New York, October 13th, 1924.

MRWC: What was your educational background prior to entering service?

SJ: I just got through freshman year in high school and then I quit because the war started and I enlisted.

MRWC: How old were you?

SJ: Eighteen.

MRWC: Eighteen? Okay. Do you remember where you were and your reaction when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

SJ: Yes I was in school but, I had no idea where Pearl Harbor was.

MRWC: Most people didn't.

SJ: Yeah, yeah.

MRWC: Do you remember any kind of reaction between you and your friends, what you thought about this?

SJ: Yeah we were all going to leave school and enlist and I guess three or four of us did.

MRWC: You enlisted in the Navy?

SJ: Right.

MRWC: Why did you pick the Navy?

SJ: Oh I don't know, I just didn't want the Army and I thought the Navy would be good. You know, get on a ship and it would be a pretty clean life, that kind of thing and I went through boot camp up in Sampson New York.

MRWC: Okay, Now you were in Sampson kind of early in November 1942?

SJ: Yes

MRWC: What was it like up there?

SJ: Well there was only one unit in service and that was "F" unit and they were building "G" unit and there was a lot of construction going on. And it was in the winter time and it was cold and muddy, you know, that kind of thing. It was all new to everyone so it wasn't just me that was walking around, "wow" you know "amazed" it was everyone.

MRWC: Did you have boats to work in or did you have out lines to the boats on the ground?

SJ: No we had a couple of boats but, we didn't do much in them because the winter came quick and it was a bad one. So we were in them maybe once or twice and that was it.

MRWC: Yeah we had some others that said they were just in outlines of boats when you were there, it was so early.

SJ: Yeah

MRWC: What kind of equipment did you use?

SJ: Well the only equipment we used was Twenty-Two's. You know when on a range. We fired Twenty-two's. I had never seen a rifle like it before. It looked like a pipe on the end of a stick you know. And we were taught how to tie knots and this kind of thing. And that's about the only equipment we did. We did some splicing and you know fit pins and stuff like that. That normal seamanship, that you forget right after you've done it.

MRWC: How long where you at Sampson?

SJ: Let's see, I went in there in November and I got out of there, I think the end of December. They were pushing us right through. What they did is they put us in a drill hall, and they said you know, this gang over here and this middle gang and another gang. They said you guys are staying here and you're going to cooks and baker's school. That was right at Sampson. The next bunch was going to Little Creek, Virginia, that was the armed guard. They went into the armed guard. The third bunch, they said you guys are going to Portsmouth, Virginia, that was the group I was in. I had no idea what it was you know until we got to Portsmouth, Virginia and it was hospital corps school. I had to think that one over, I didn't know if I wanted to do that or not. I guess I made up my mind and I got up the nerve to go to the old man and say "look I want out of this thing" and he so much as told me "hey kid, you're in it you

know and the only way out of it is in a wooden overcoat, so make the best of it." So that's what we had to do.

MRWC: What kind of specialized training did you receive there?

SJ: Well it was all the medical stuff. Materia medica therapeutics, and nursing and first aid and all that kind of stuff. Doing splints, and carrying people and all this. And when you got a rate, you were a pharmacist mate and to me it didn't relate at all because we didn't do anything with, you know we gave pills but a doctors said "here you give these pills" We never figured it out ourselves.

MRWC: Did they train you in minor surgery?

SJ: Yeah

MRWC: Stitching people up?

SJ: Yeah

MRWC: How long were you trained there?

SJ: It was about eight weeks.

MRWC: Do you think when you eventually went into combat do you think you were prepared?

SJ: Well I had more training after that.

MRWC: Oh you had more training, where did you go for that?

SJ: Well after I got out of Hospital Corps school, I went to Norfolk Virginia, the Naval operating base, there was a hospital there and I did a lot of medical work. I handed out tennis balls and (quaits), and bow and arrows, and all that kind of stuff. Golfing equipment, you know, I had a shed and all the stuff was in it and I'd get your name, the patients you know, and that's what I did. But every once in a while I had to stand watch in some ward where someone was really sick or something. They would give you a run down of what you had to do okay. But somewhere along the line, I goofed up because I got "shanghai" out of there and I was sent to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. And there was quite a few of us that went to that. Then we went through field medical training school which was doing what we knew how to do, what we were taught to do in corps school, out in the field under combat conditions.

MRWC: Do you think that prepared you?

SJ: Oh yeah, yes.

MRWC: Did you use any side arms?

SJ: Yes I had a choice. I could get a carbine or a forty-five and I chose a carbine until I found out that it shoots curves after. You don't get good distance with it. Later on I picked up a Garand and that's what I carried.

MRWC: Okay. How long were you at Lejeune?

SJ: Oh I don't know, I think, it's hard to remember how long I was there. It was very little because we went through all the training, to infiltration course, and the rifle range a couple of times and all the medical stuff and then we had classes where you sat in a hot metal building and some Marine officer would give you the history of the Marine Corps and the rocks and shoals of that kind of stuff. It was very boring you know. He would even fall asleep as he was giving us this stuff, but it was a requirement you know. And when you think about it, it was good you know. And the guy that did it was a WWI veteran; he was a Major I think.

MRWC: Where did you go after Lejeune?

SJ: After Lejeune I went aboard ship, I went aboard the USS Clay, it was a transport, an APA. And it was a shakedown cruise and I went aboard as a troop. We were in a replacement battalion, we were in the 39th replacement battalion and left from Norfolk VA. We rode a train from Lejeune to Norfolk and then got on the ship. And we went through the Panama Canal and went to Pearl Harbor.

MRWC: Were you on a convoy or a single ship?

SJ: We were on a convoy but they were dragging a target and there were planes shooting at the back of the target. You they were doing a lot of training on the way over. And it was there shakedown for that ship. It was a nice ship. It was brand new. It had a lot of things wrong with it. We didn't realize it, but the crew did.

MRWC: When you arrived in Hawaii, then were you assigned a unit?

SJ: No, we went into a, they called it a, I forget what they call it, but some kind of a "repo depot" where everyone came in and if they needed a machine gunner, or a cook, or something like that, they would pull them out because it was a mixture of corpsman and Marines and all that. So then I was told I had to go aboard this ship with some other guys, and we got on this transport and we took off and we went out into the Pacific out into the islands. We went to this island that had just been attacked before we got over there and it was in the Marshall group. I believe it was "Roi Namur" or something like that. We joined an outfit there, I joined the 22nd Marines there and I stayed with them for the whole WWII.

MRWC: You dressed in Marine fatigues, but wore a Navy rate on your arm?

SJ: Yes, yes. When I first went there it was just a red cross and we wore it down low. At the beginning, I was a hospital apprentice, 2nd class which is equal to a Corporal. So you wore a Corporal's stripes, but you didn't wear them on both arms, just on your left arm, and you wore the Red Cross down low and that signified you were a corpsman.

MRWC: How were you treated by the regular Marines?

SJ: First it was nothing but arguments and fights and ridicule and you know "swabby", this and that and the other thing. But we had a couple of sailors that beat up a few Marines and the old man had us for a

captain's mess. He's like I got to start this off, I got to find this sailor that beat up four of my Marines. He was a tough guy. But after we were with him a while and after we went in to training with him we became friends.

MRWC: So your first landing was on Guam?

SJ: Guam, yeah

MRWC: Did you want to tell us about that?

SJ: I got on this amphibious, well I was on a transport and then we transferred from the transport to an LST. We had to sleep topside because there wasn't enough room for everyone. We were only on it a couple of days. No wait a minute, Guam, no we were on it for fifty-eight days. We floated around. See there is Saipan, Tinian and Guam. And we were going to hit Guam and Saipan was having a hard time, so they kept us on reserve. So we floated around the Pacific for fifty-eight days. We got attacked by some "Betty's" they came in and they carried a torpedo. You know me and this other guy were playing cards sitting on a spud locker you know and this thing came and flew right between our LST and the one next to us, and it was just skipping the top of the water. And I said "wow what the hell was that" and then we see the meatballs on the wings. "Phew, I tell yeah, you can't dig in there."

But we were lucky, we got through it alright. They shot it down, and it came back the next day and raised some hell, and this and that. And then Saipan started to go pretty good so we went to some other island, I don't remember which one it was. We got some mail and we got some beer, stayed there over night, and then a couple days later, we made the landing. Well we went to the tank deck and got in the amphibious tractor. You were assigned which one and I was assigned to go in this one that was a major, and he had a jeep on it. It was one of these with a ramp in the back, it was a newer one. They had some of the old ones too. I was assigned to him, and by the way this guy, his name was Courtney. He got the Medal of Honor on Okinawa and he was killed.

Well anyhow, we started off, you know, we got our wave to go. And we were between I think the second wave and the next one. We got out and we made a turn and all this amphibious tractor does is go round in circles because one of the wheels wasn't working. You know they run on those tracks, even turn the water, so we were just going around in circles. So now they had to transfer us from that one to the next one; to another, but the jeep stayed in that one. I don't know I mean, we ended up without a jeep. But anyhow, by the time we got on the beach it must have been the third/forth wave was hitting. And there was a lot of casualties, there were a lot of amphibious tractors that were hit, there was a lot of guys that were in the water and we were busy taking care of them for the longest time. But then they had another outfit come in, some more corpsman, and some more Marines came in. The one's that made the initial landing, which included us. We had to start moving. We had to catch up with our troops and move. Well Major Courtney had what we call the "OP" party it was the observation party. And we'd get up and see what the "Japs" were doing. You know it was maybe, sometimes it was fifteen; sometimes there was twenty-five in a group. He was a pretty gung-hoe character I'll tell you. We took a hell of a beating at a place called "Road junction fifteen in Guam" and that was on the way to what was left of the Marine Corps barracks. We had a lot of guys killed.

It was at that road junction fifteen, it was just one of those things we walked right into. They had cross fires set up and boy they slaughtered us. After we got to the Marine barracks, and took over, I got sick. I had the chills and all this business. See we were out like I said, we were out floating around for fifty-eight days and we ran out of Atebrin. And there was a lot of malaria and a lot of dengue fever and crap like that, that affected all of us. So I got sent down to the beach and they put a tag on me, they said "go on down to the beach and get some juice and get some rest and then come back when you're feeling better." You know, the old man told me that, so I said okay. I went down to the beach and there was a hospital there. There was a second separate hospital. See we were a bastard off of the 22nd Marines, we weren't in a division, we were just a regiment. We were with the 4th Marines and the 11th Marines, so we were a brigade. We were the first provisional Marine brigade. So anyhow, the hospital was a second separate hospital and I was staying there. So they gave me a can of juice and they said "just take it easy and when you feel better" they started me on a regiment of Atebrin and right about then the "Japs" pulled a counter-attack. They were knocking off the hospitals on the beach. So they evacuated us all out to the ocean you know, we got aboard ships. And I got on this, well it was an APA. All I remember is that, Cesar Romero was a Chief on there, it was a Coast Guard thing I think. I never saw him, but that's what they said "Cesar Romero" and I said "boy that's great." But anyhow I ended up, back in Pearl Harbor because we went here, and we went there. Every ship we went to looked down and you know said "We'll take him, him, and him and they'd lift you up, lift the lighter up (the boat we were in) and they'd pick out who they were going to take, they we doing a triage there. Well I looked bad because I had a lot of blood on me. It wasn't mine, it was everybody else's. So I got picked on one ship and I went on that thing. It was that Cesar Romero's ship. So they were doing operations there, and this doctor said "You sit there on the floor" on the deck, it was in the mess hall and they were working on everybody, you know. And that's the first time I ever saw that operation. I've seen it in the field, the Aid station, and this and that, but never on a ship. So finally this doctor says "So where were you hit?" And I said "I wasn't hit" you know, and he's calling this other doctor saying "Look it, he's got blood in his ears" he said it's a sign of a concussion or something. I said wait a minute, I'm a corpsman. I said this is other people's blood, I wasn't hit. I got that blood on me somehow, from my hands or whatever. They stuck me in a ward, and they gave me a shot, and that was the end of it for a while. And I ended up back in Pearl, which was alright. So while I was there I said "Hell, I've got nothing else to do", my appendix started bothering me, so they took those out. Just one of those things, the doctor said "You're going to work today, you know I'd been there a while. So I get out there to work, I was going to work in a tomato patch. You know, we were hoeing them up. Jeeze I got this pain in the gut. So I go see the doctor, and he says "You're goofing off" and I said no I'm not, I really got a pain. So he checked me out and he took a blood test, and that's what it was. I had appendicitis. So they took them out, and I took it easy for a while. And then I got back to the 22nd. They had gone to Guadalcanal. That was our home base where we would set up. So I caught a ride on a ship, and I hitch-hiked. I had my records- I carried my own records. They said get whatever you can, get on whatever you ship you can and they'll take you there...eventually. So it took a while, but eventually I ended up on a canal, and I ended up in a 3rd battalion and I didn't like that because I was in a 2nd battalion. Finally I got that squared away and got back to where I belonged. Then we trained for the next operation. We didn't know what it was but, it was Okinawa, and we landed there. That was April 1. Easter Sunday, April fool's day, it was the whole nine yards, that whole same day. We had an unopposed landing, I think they subbed us right in. And it

was easy, and then we went up north. We went the hell up north. We went to the northern tip of Okinawa and we were like 350 miles from the southern tip of Japan, and with nobody on our left flank. So we stayed up there for a while and then I guess it was the 27th or the 25th Army division, was having a problem down south. The 1st Marine Division, was down south, and these guys were tied in next to them. So they got the word to us and they loaded us on trucks and down we went and we replaced the 1st Marine Division. Man for man, hole for hole. They moved over, and they took out the 25th or 27th, whichever one it was. They took them out and gave them a break. And that's when we started getting into a lot of combat. We ran into sugar loaf hill, and that was a mess. And that's when Courtney got killed.

MRWC: Were you still assigned to him when that happened?

SJ: Yeah, yeah.

MRWC: Were you near him when he was hit?

SJ: No I wasn't with him. What happened was, a couple of days before he was killed, we were on a hill. We were OPing it up, "snooping and booping." We were watching the Japs and this and that, and all of a sudden some Jap, appeared on top of this hill. And it was all rocks and coral and crap like that. And he had a satchel charge, you know it was a wooden box with a detonator on it. And he threw that, and it came down and it landed right in between all these rocks and things...luckily. And it blew up, all it was, was concussion because it was a wooden box. It didn't have any shrapnel, or anything like that. But it blew the shit out of all of us. You know we were all dopey and crummy there for a while. And Courtney got some, when it blew this coral, he got hit in the leg. I think it was the left leg. It was right about here. So I had to take care of that for him. Like I said he was a gung-hoe son of a bitch. "That's too much of a battle dressing" I put a 12 inch battle dressing on him because he was hit in about four different places. He said "I can't move around with that, I got to be able to move around" So I said alright, okay and I pulled some of the stuffing out of it and you know, I did what I could. I got him fixed up and then he was alright. So it was like two or three days later and we hit sugar loaf hill and the first group of the 22nd went up and got kicked right off of it and there was a lot of casualties. I think it was that night or the next night, there was a lot of action going on and we were at the foot of this thing. And Courtney took volunteers, you know. So we were all there and I was going to go with him. He's says, "You go back and stay at the bottom of the hill", he says "I don't want you coming up the hill with us." He was killed up there. I didn't like that man but he was a good Marine. I'll tell you why I didn't like him. There was one of the guys that we all knew, he was a good guy, he got the left cheek of his ass blown off. And there he was laying there and they had gauze over him, you know to keep the flies and crap off him, the blow flies. A lot of his insides were sticking out, he'd had it. And they just had him laying there. They had him pretty well doped up and everyone there would lie to him. You know "how bad is it?" "Oh you're alright, you're gonna be okay." He was left there to die. And this man comes over and he picks up the gauze and he says, "Jesus Christ, you bought the farm." And you know, that got to me. And I got in some trouble, I said "You're an asshole" and I yelled at him. I never got any more rate after that. You know I made second class and that was the end of it. I don't know whether he had anything to do with it, he was dead after that, a short while after that. Maybe it's my imagination, cause I didn't like the man. I didn't like

him for that reason, I figured hey there's a well educated guy, a Major, and he's acting like a well, just what I called him, an asshole. So anyhow we stayed on Okinawa 110 days and then we got sent back. Then we went to Guam and that was our home base. It was a year to the day from the time we invaded Guam to the time we came back. So it was quite a celebration. You know they had the booze out, you know everyone was there to welcome us. So we stayed there, and then I had enough time to come home. See by then, there was just no ships coming home. And then the war ended, so we were sitting there and then this one morning this guy calls me. And he's like hey Greek look down in the bay. Great big flat top. It was the Bonhomme Richard and they put us on it. It was used as a ferry boat to bring home the guys and it was the first trip it made. Jeeze they threw away airplanes and ammunition, they were throwing them over the side you know because the war was over. And we were running with lights on and it was great.

MRWC: Did they have accommodations on it?

SJ: What they did was they gave you a folding bunk and they had a square and I was in the "J's" We did everything by alphabetical order. So I slept in the J, down in the hanger deck, in a square that was marked off and it had a white J in the middle. So that's where I slept. In the morning when I got up, I'd fold up that cot, and go to another spot where there was another J and stow my gear there. And my sea bag was there, and my cot was there. So we had to do that every day and the rest of the day we did all kinds of stuff. We chipped paint, you know, we hung around. There wasn't much to do and it was a long trip home because we took a long route. We got to Treasure Island, in San Francisco. We came under the bridge, and some of those planes that took off from the Bonhomme, flew under the bridge...upside down. Anyhow we got a little liberty and stuff like that and I came home and got discharged. And I was in the reserve okay, I joined the 1st engineer company in Albany. It was a Marine Corps engineer company and some of the guys that I had been in the 22nd Marines with were in it. So I figured well we'll go play cards together and we'll drink a few beers and have some fun. We'll go to Camp Lejeune in the summertime and all this. And we did, up until August (whatever it was) I forget what day it was. We were activated, they activated the unit. So we went to Camp Pendleton. We marched down New Scotland Avenue; we were in the CBA rifle range there that was our home base. And we marched from there all the way down to the train station.

MRWC: What year was that?

SJ: 1950

MRWC: Okay

SJ: Yup and the mayor from Schenectady was there, and the city manager and mayor Corning was there. All the dignitaries were there to see us off. And I remember every one of them, they all took turns saying "these men are not going overseas, they're going over there to Camp Pendleton to train those Marines that are going to go overseas." Yeah you believe that one and well tell you another one. So we got to Pendleton, and we went right into training again, re-training okay. So I told you in 1943, I went through that school at Camp Lejeune and became a field medical technician. Sergeant Crow was in charge of us. He was a good guy. He said "how many of you guys went through field medical training school?" And I'm

thinking to myself, I'm not going to tell him I went through it, you know let him find that out and I can get some more training, that I think I should have. So we started through that stuff again but halfway through that training we were at the rifle range and Crow comes down and he said "You fall out" and he called a couple other guys who were pulling the same thing I did. So were told that we had to go on the next draft because we had had that training. He said "I know what you were doing" and he said "that's okay" and he agreed with us. So anyhow, we went overseas. We got to Japan. We got kids that sneak through. They were going to CBA, that's how young they were. I was 24 almost 25 when we got recalled. And some of these kids never been through boot camp. All they knew how to do is what they were taught at the rifle range, up there on New Scotland Avenue. Some of them sneaked through, but the majority of them. They did a pretty good job, they got most of them, and they put them through boot camp. SO they did get the basic training, and I'm happy for that because, you had to have it. I strongly believe if you don't have that, then you don't belong out in combat. So anyhow, we got to Japan, and they outfitted us out Everybody went out and got drunk and did their thing and then a couple of days later we were on a ship that took us to Korea. I got there November the 12th 1950. And joined the Dog Medical Company. Now this is all together a different life then I had with the Marine Corps before. Before I was in a company, I was part of a group. Now I'm with a rear echelon kind of an outfit that moves in two sections. One section moves up, and then the other one moves up and you set up a hospital. So anyhow I got assigned to that and we were in this place called Chipyeong-ni. We were just across from the 38th Parallel. That was after the Wonsan landing. The Wonsan harbor, so it was a little north of that. And then the winter started coming in. And we didn't have any winter gear other then sweaters and some long underwear- stuff like that and your greens. We didn't have any parkas or gloves, or anything like that. So they had to scrounge up stuff like that for everybody. And we got those shoepacks, they called them Italian mountain boots. They were an awful thing, they were big. If you wore a size ten shoe, or a nine, you were a size twelve shoe, shoepack. And it had a great big felt insole in it. It was about that thick. So you got two pairs of insoles. One pair you kept inside your shirt, next to your body, and a pair of socks, heavy socks. And the other pair was in your shoes, so when you changed, you just changed those socks. Well after about a week, you start smelling like hell. Anyhow those things were always wet. You marched, your feet got wet, and there was no way to get them out of there. You had to dry them somehow. So you had to go through this ritual every night to dry your stuff. That what caused most of the guys to get frost bite and their feet screwed up. Mine are screwed up, there not bad but there are a lot of guys worse than mine. I've gone to the VA and I'm a diabetic- diabetic 2, that came in 1997. You know as you get old, you get that stuff. I went through, the doctor checked me and he said you have loss feeling in your feet. I said so is that right? and he said yeah. He stuck me with an opened up paper clip. And he would say "can you feel this, can you feel that" There were some areas where I couldn't feel anything. So we got done and he said "is there anything else you want to tell me- anything else wrong with you?" and I said well yeah I'm a diabetic and I just found that out. And he said whoa you got to go down and take a blood test. So we took a blood test and then what I got as a result of all this is: Yeah you're a diabetic and that's what is wrong with your feet, it isn't frostbite. So who cares, I don't care. You know how I feel? I can get along without them...really. There are guys that should be taken care of, and thank God most of those guys are being taken care of. So I don't need that, I can take care of myself.

So anyhow we started off on the 12th of November and we started going north. And we'd go in like two sections. I was in section 1. We'd get on these trucks, on the 6 by 6's and the tents were on there, and the fuel, 55 gallon drums of fuel oil. You know everything you needed was in there. And you would go up and the first thing you did was put up a hospital tent. And that was 100 feet long (the first one) and then you would add to it as you go on. And we would put up the hospital tent and we would put up the pyramidal tents, you could put six guys in them. We put up those for the doctors and the officers, then finally we would get a chance to put our own up. And then a couple of days later the next group would come up with the remainders. So we were always moving. The first group would move out and you may be at a place for a couple of days, you may be there a week. When we got up to the reservoir, up to the chosen reservoir, we were there a long time. Well a long time, I think it was, maybe two weeks I don't know. We didn't have it as bad as the guys up in. Are you familiar with what happened up?

MRWC: Somewhat, yes.

SJ: Okay. So division went up there, and the 7th Marines were at Yudam ni which was north west, I guess from us. Then north from us was Hagaroo, and the 5th Marines were there and some of the 7th Marines, they were moving around. And some of the 1st Marines went up there, cause we traveled with the 1st Marine regiment. So we set up at Kodori which was I think, 12 miles down the road from Hagaroo, and that's where we were. And a couple of times I went up to Hagaroo, me and another guy, with a jeep and a trailer because there was a water point up there. We didn't have a water point where we were and we needed water for the chow lines and all that crap. So a lot of times when you went up to Hagaroo, you had to stay there at night because they didn't want you on the road at night by yourself. So we stayed, and a few nights we got hit. But I think around the 27th of November, all hell broke loose, the old crap hit the fan that night. It was bad all over. And we started getting casualties and you couldn't believe it, the way they were coming in, my God. My job was I worked outside and when these guys would come in, we would bring them in into the receiving tent and then somebody would take over from there. I didn't do any first aid to anybody there. I was just a pair of hands and I had a gang that worked with me.

MRWC: Now were all the tents heated?

SJ: Not all of them, but most of them were. Where you had a lot of guys, you had the little tin stove. It could either run on oil or it could run on wood, or coal, or whatever you had. It got so cold up there we were mixing gasoline with the oil and that was taboo and that was bad. A few tents burned up, but you had to do something. It was really cold up there. Anyhow that was my job, was to unload these guys and then when they were going out, if they were leaving, I had the book. As we put a guy or two guys on a bell, in a hollow helicopter, you know the glass bubble above the skids you had half of a stoke stretcher that had fabric on it to keep it warm. And it had a cover for it. So you put two guys in, one on each skid. And they had a little glass thing about this big where they could look out of. They could see who they hell knows, I don't know. They could see the rotors going around or something. But anyhow we would load these guys on and then I would get their names, make sure that I had everything and then they would take off. I remember this one day, you've heard of o'l Chesty Puller?

MRWC: Yes

SJ: Well Chesty had the 1st Marines and he was right with us most of the time you know. I knew who he was, you know you would see him every day and say good morning General or something but I didn't shoot the shit with him or anything. But I was out on the strip there where we had TBF's or whatever they were. These Navy fighter bombers that come in and they would take casualties out and I think you could get around 6 or 8 people on them as long as they weren't stretcher cases. As long as they were just ambulatory, you could stuff them in there. So we had those, we had some piper cubs, where you could put one guy in it, and we had the bell helicopters that you could put two guys in. If they come in with a "Sakortzie" that meant one stretcher case. You had to stick them in through one window and they stuck out the other side. And then you could have some guys go in there that were ambulatory. So anyhow doctor Adams he was the guy that was in charge of all the moving of patients and getting out to the ships and stuff and I worked for him. We were out on the field and he called me and there was a guy with him. So I went over and he said "Did Captain Barber go out?" And I said well I'll look, so I look in the book. And I said yeah we got him out yesterday. I put him on a sakortzie, he was one of those guys that was jammed in. So Chesty says "thanks Aspirin, now I believe it." And I found out what had happened. He had asked doctor Adams, of course I got the book, Adams doesn't know. And he said did Captain Barber go out? And he said "yeah I think so" and Chesty says "I don't care what you think, did he go out?" So now we had the book and I had initialed it where I put him, because it was important that you did those things. I always had a lot of respect for Chesty. He was a good guy. I'll tell you an incident that happened one time. We had some real thieves in the medical company. Some of these corpsman, they could get anything you wanted. They went out and they got a great big box like this. They took a jeep and they went to some Army place and they got this big card board box and they brought it up to Dog Med and we opened it up and it was full of boxes of cigars. And these were boxes of fifties, so everybody had cigars, everybody. They didn't charge anybody anything. So somehow the Army got ahold of the numbers that were on the jeep, wherever the hell they stole the cigars from. This Colonel and a couple of captains come up and they were at the 1st Marines, raising hell, and they wanted to find out who the hell stole their cigars. So Chesty didn't want to have anything to do with this kind of crap and anyhow he's sitting at his desk, with his shirt pocket full of cigars! The "Hot loot" And he's sitting there and I had to bring these two guys, Casavan and another guy because they worked for me. I had to bring them down there you know. So I go down and Chesty says to these guys "Okay I'm going to take care of everything." This Colonel keeps saying "well what are you going to do, you going to take some kind of action?" Chesty says "This is my command; I'm going to take the action I see fit." So here we are in the asshole of the world and he tells this Army Colonel, he says "these men are restricted" and that was the punishment. I thought "oh boy, you're alright" But Jesus there he is sitting with those cigars in his pocket and he didn't smoke cigars. He would cut them up and put them in his pipe. Then he would light them and smoke them that way.

Well anyhow I stayed there until we got out of the reservoir, we walked out. They said when we get down to the railhead, I don't know how far that was from where we were. It was quite a ways. We had to walk from Kodori to the railhead. What happened was the 7th Marines, came from Yudam-ni, to Hagaroo. They went through Hagaroo, and then they came down to Kodori, and then they started on

down to go to Hanam, the seaport and that's where the ships were that were going to take us out. Then the 5th Marines came through us, and went on down and then the 1st Marines fought the rear action on the way down. But the 5th Marines and the 7th were up on the ridges and all this crap and they kept the main supply route open so we could get out of there. Anyhow they said once you get down to the railhead, you can probably ride on a truck but until that time we had to walk. It was a long walk and it was cold. It was like twenty, thirty below zero. As long as you were moving, it didn't bother you. So by 11 o'clock at night we get down to the railhead. They said okay you can get on the trucks now. So we got on the trucks and we started out. I don't think we went two or three miles and the truck in front of us got hit. It was carrying ammunition so oh boy everything was cartwheels coming out of there. You know all these explosives going off. So we got the hell off of the truck we were on and it was a good thing we did because there was fifty-five gallon drums of aviation fuel on that truck and we didn't know it. There were only three of us on the back of that truck. So anyhow they ambushed us, and we were laying in this ditch all night till the next morning. That's when I think my feet really frosted up because my feet and my socks became wet. So anyhow the next morning we got going again and we ended up down to Hanam. They gave us something to eat and then we went aboard the ship. Then we ended up down in Pusan. That was something, they just kept feeding us breakfast. All the time we were on that ship, all we were getting was breakfast, but it was good.

MRWC: Now you said that one of the funniest incidences was the encounter with the Greek Airforce?

SJ: Yes.

MRWC: When did that happen?

SJ: That happened after we got down from the Chosin and we started out again in the spring. I don't remember, it might have been around this place called Inje. I'm not sure, I lost track of where we were. But doctor Adams, the guy that I worked for, He knew I was Greek see and he said "We got Greek Airforce coming in and they got a C47 and their going to come in." And the way it's going to work is, we don't have any communications with them, but we'll lay out panels. So he said "we'll send you out in the morning." I had myself, and a black kid, this was an Army outfit now and they were all blacks. And they had these very good ambulances, boy they were better than anything we had. They had good heaters in them and they could really hold a lot of people. So we had this black kid, and come to find out he was from Troy, New York. So he and I became friends. So we go out to the airstrip in the morning and we lay out the panels and then we would wait there. These Greeks would come around, they would do a loop, they would fly around and saw the orange panels lying out, they would land. When they made that loop, we would radio back and say okay start moving the casualties, because they were like twenty miles away, maybe twenty-five. So they'd start them out in those good ambulances that were well heated and they would line up and they could take something like forty-something and put them on those C47's. And they were stacked in there, man they had the straps hanging down you know, and the stretchers would go in. Then they would take off with them. Those Greek's would always say "come with us, come with us" and I'm like what do you mean come on with you? And they were like we are going to K2, K3, then we end up in Japan and then we come back again and do this route again. I said "Look, I'm not going with you guys. I mean one of these days somebody's going to come looking for me and I'm not

going to be around and then my wife's going to get a dear John letter." Your Steve is gone, or whatever. They finally understood, but they would bring me back a bottle of whiskey or something from Japan. They were good guys. You know what's funny about it? Most of them could speak English. They could speak English so well they had the Limey accent because that's where they were trained. But doctor Adams didn't know that. So it was a good job, I enjoyed it. But one day we got out there and it was me and the black kid and a guy named Gunther, we used to call him gunny. And somebody else, I forget who the other guy was. But we went out there and were laying our panels out and all this and these Chinese opened up on us. They were up on the side of the hill there, they were in the woods there. And they opened up on us and they bend us down, there was only four or five of us out there, whatever the hell it was. Then this other guy came, and he came with a jeep and he was going to help. He gets out of the jeep and we were trying to yell to him, he was quite a ways away from us. And Jesus, don't he get shot. He gets hit right in the head, awe man it killed him just like that. So we had already radioed back and then they sent a squad of Marines down and they went up and they went through and they cleaned those guys out. But that was the only time we really got harassed on the airstrip like that. Most of the times we were alright.

When we were at Kodari, we could see the Chinese up on the mountain there. The only way you could see them is if they turned around and faced you because then you would see that their faces were dark. They were wearing white parkas and white. Their rifles were white, everything was white. And you couldn't see them, they would move around up there and you wouldn't see them until they turned around and faced you and then you could see a dark face. And it was a game of you know "don't bother us and we won't bother you", and that's the way it went for the longest time. But every once in a while, we would get up in the morning and there would be three or four Chinese sitting outside of the tents there at Kodari and their feet would be about this big. They were wearing those goddamn sneakers. We had trouble with the shoes we were wearing but these guys were wearing sneakers and their feet were just frozen solid. And they were in bad shape and they couldn't take that cold any better than we could. I don't care what anybody says, a lot of guys would say "oh there tougher than us or they can withstand that cold and we can't." You know, that's a lot of bull. I don't know. And a lot of times they would turn our prisoners loose. When the going got too rough for them, and the Marines were on hot pursuit of their butts, they would turn the guys loose. They would shag ass but leave the Marines there. And that's how we got them back, and they hadn't been too bad to them. In most cases, they were pretty good to them. They gave them rice to eat. You had to eat what they did. They would have a big sock hanging around their neck full of rice. How the hell they ate that stuff, I don't know. But anyhow, that was a hundred years ago as far as I'm concerned. I belong to the Chosin few, and it's a lot of good guys and this and that. There is a lot of these guys, that's all they have in life, is that. I feel sorry for them, really. I meant that's all they do. I've got one guy, he constantly calls me up. He says yesterday me and Helen did this and we went to a funeral up in here and there. And I keep thinking "Jesus, don't you have another life?" Is it just...two weeks out of your life was up there in the Chosin and that's all the hell you got left. You know that's...that's pathetic.

MRWC: How long were you in Korea?

SJ: A year.

MRWC: Was there a difference between the medical equipment between World War II and Korea? Was there any changes?

SJ: There was more whole blood. In World War II it was mostly plasma, I never saw much blood. Of course I wasn't in the rear. We carried plasma. We carried two units, one was the dry unit and the other was the water unit and you had to mix them together. Luckily I always had some Marine that would carry one of my units and I would carry the other one. We would put it together when necessary. It was tough because when a guy is wounded, all his veins, they flatten out and it's hard to get one. The kits that they had in World War II, the needle they had, it was like a eight penny nail for Christ sake, it was big. And it wasn't very sharp and you had to stick a guy three or four times to finally get it into him. In the Korean war I think they were better- the needles. They were better than what we had in World War II. But there was the whole blood and that was a problem when it was cold, it would stiffen up. What you had to do was put mineral oil on the tygon tubing, and you would hook the guy up and then you would have to have some guy strip it, like your milking a cow. Strip the tygon tubing and push the blood through. Otherwise it would congeal. I don't know, I heard some of the doctors say "thank God there was this freezing thing" wounds would freeze up and there wasn't that much loss of blood as there was in World War II. I don't know, thank God I was wounded. Somehow I got through two wars without being wounded. I did come close a few times.

MRWC: How do you think your time in service affected your life?

SJ: Well it put me behind quite a bit. Not during World War II. During WWII I didn't have anything else to do okay. But during the Korean war, I was married, I had a two year old kid. I was working for the Knolls atomic power laboratory and I went and I told them. You know I said hey my reserve unit got called and I'm going to have to go. And were on active duty as of the 7th of August I guess it was. This guy, I don't know, I can't remember what his name was, he's all "oh you can't go." I was on a fire department, we had this special training and all this crap you know because we were the first people in a situation where we might find a fire, or where there was radioactive material, you know stuff like that. And we were being trained for all this, so we had kind of an important job to do alright. So this guy says "they can't take you, you know and blah blah blah." So I said "fine, one way or the other" So you know I didn't hear nothing from him, didn't hear nothing from him, after the last day. So he comes up and he says "You got to go." I said "well okay now I know where I'm going" He said "I thought I could get you out of it." And I said "well you thought wrong, Uncle Sam is thinking different." And my attitude was hey I signed up with this. I was free, white and twenty-one and I knew what I was signing. I knew what I was getting into and if I had to go, I had to go and I would make the best of it. You deal the hand your dealt.

MRWC: Okay well thank you very much for your interview.

SJ: Thank you